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FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3652
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE
RUEHDG/AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO 0641
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RUCPDOC/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS SAN SALVADOR 002181

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: ECON EFIS SENV ES
SUBJECT: SALVADORAN PAYMENT OF IATTC DUES AND LETTER FOR SECRETARY RICE

REF: STATE 137743

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: Econoff delivered reftel demarche on non-payment of Inter-American Tropical Tuna Comission (IATTC) contributions to the Center for the Development of Fisheries and Aquaculture (CENDEPESCA) director Manuel Fermin Oliva and Fisheries Coordinator Sonia Salavarria. They understand the need for the payment, but could not say when El Salvador will pay, citing budgetary issues and the timing of the fiscal year as well as the cost of the program. Oliva and Salavarria also provided copies of letters addressed to Secretary Rice and Secretary of Commerce on dolphin safe tuna

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labeling requirements. The letters are to be presented by the Embassies of the signatory countries in Washington at a date to be determined. The letters have not been officially released by the parties and should be handled accordingly. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) Econoff met with CENDEPESCA director Manuel Fermin Oliva and with the Fisheries Coordinator Sonia Salavarria to discuss the non-payment of contributions to the IATTC for FY2006. Oliva said the funds have to be requested from the Ministry of Finance, which is currently working on next year's budget, and Oliva said they will wait for a more opportune time to request the funds. No partial payments have been made; Oliva and Salavarria are confident El Salvador will pay but cannot say when. Another issue for CENDEPESCA is the timing of the fiscal year for the IATTC, which is different than the calendar year based system used in El Salvador, complicating the payment process.

¶3. (U) Oliva and Salavarria reaffirmed their interest in participating in the IATTC and the Agreement on the International Dolphin Conservation Program (AIDCP), and the importance of these programs for maintaining the Eastern Pacific Ocean ecosystem. They also spoke about the rising costs of the IATTC, the structure of the organization, and that there could come a point where El Salvador would not be able to pay steadily rising contribution levels. They said to offset rising costs the organization should look at ways to cut overhead, including the possible movement of the office from La Jolla, California to a lower cost location.

¶4. (SBU) Salavarria provided econoff with copies of identical letters addressed to Secretary Rice and Secretary of Commerce Gutierrez which focus on the dolphin safe tuna label and problems faced by exporters seeking to enter the U.S. tuna market. Originals of these letters will be delivered in Washington by the embassies of the interested parties on a date to be determined. These copies have not been approved for release by the interested parties, so please handle accordingly. The following is an unofficial translation of letters, copies of which will be faxed to WHA/CEN and OES/OMC.

Begin Text

El Salvador, August 23, 2006

It is a pleasure to greet you and, at the same time, we refer to you an issue that is of utmost importance to our nations in the fisheries, environmental and socioeconomic areas as they relate to tuna fishing, dolphin conservation and the protection of the maritime ecosystem of the Eastern Pacific Ocean.

As you know, since we have addressed this issue with your government in the past, 15 countries including the United States of America, have subscribed to the Agreement on the International Dolphin Conservation Program (AIDCP), which has served to successfully promote responsible fishery practices, effectively achieving, with transparency and scientific information, both the sustainability of the tuna fishery and the integral protection of the different species of the maritime ecosystem, especially dolphins, with that said, this Agreement has achieved recognition from international organizations such as the United Nations Organization for Food and Agriculture (FAO) and well known environmental NGOs, among others.

The countries that are members of the Agreement on the International Dolphin Conservation Program (AIDCP) have committed since 1991 to the implementation of the "dolphin safe" concept that is within the subscribed fishery agreements, and even though the United States has conducted activities to comply with its commitments, including its participation in the judicial process, to date, there is a different "dolphin safe" definition to that of the Agreement, which prevents the effective access of our tuna products and limits the implementation of the free trade agreements that have been signed with your country.

The adoption and implementation in the United States of the "dolphin safe" concept that is established would not only maintain the APICD but also will provide an effective access to the U.S. market, removing unfair trade barriers.

Despite the continuous efforts that our governments and industries have made to comply with the Agreement, the acceptance of tuna in the United States is significantly limited if it lacks the "dolphin safe" certification. Without which, discriminates and impedes sales on an equal basis, affects the competitiveness of our products in the U.S. market and generates a negative impact in the development of our fishery industries, since the U.S. market is the objective of many of the countries signing this letter.

We consider that while the internal process continues in the United States to implement the "dolphin safe" concept, which has been going on for more than 10 years now, we cannot continue to allow it to affect our tuna fisheries development; thus we request the administration of the United States to disclose publicly before the relevant private entities of your country related to the sales of tuna, the official position of your government on this issue.

This would contribute significantly to stop the continued deterioration of our industries resulting from the perception that the tuna fishing industry in our countries is not sustainable and does not respect the maritime environment and that the U.S. government is opposed to it. This in light of the fact that U.S. commercial companies on many occasions have shown their interest in purchasing the product but only if it is consistent with the policy of their own government.

We consider that the above can be accomplished through informative events in the United States, like the ones that have successfully taken place in other parts of the APICD, conducted under the organization and leadership of the government of the host country. For that, our countries are in the best disposition to support such events. We hope that the events could start in Washington D.C., on the soonest date possible.

Sincerely,

Hector Hernandez Amador
Agriculture and Livestock Secretary
Honduras

Mario E. Salaverria
Minister of Agriculture and Livestock
El Salvador

Mario Salvo Horvilleur
Agriculture and Forestry Minister
Nicaragua

Bernardo Lopez
Vice Minister of Agriculture, Renewable Natural Resources and Food
Guatemala

Guillermo Salazar N.
Minister of Agriculture and Livestock Development
Panama

Mario Castellanos
Secretary of State

SIPDIS
Belize

Javier Trujillo Arriaga
SENASICA/SAGARPA Director
Mexico

Leandro Mercedes
Agriculture Under Secretary
Dominican Republic

End Text.

Barclay